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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000909

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR BRIAN WALCH
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR MICHELLE GAVIN

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TAGS: PREL PGOV ZI

SUBJECT: HARARE: AMBASSADOR'S COURTESY CALLS ON BULGARIAN
AND EU AMBASSADORS

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CHARLES A. RAY FOR REASONS 1.4 B,D

¶1. (U) Ambassador Ray is in the process of making courtesy calls on Ambassadors to diplomatic missions accredited to Zimbabwe. This is the first report on visits of interest.

BULGARIA

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: A meeting on November 17 with Atanas Budev, Charge d' Affaires of the Bulgarian Embassy was my first courtesy call on members of the diplomatic corps (other than attendance of meetings of the Fishmongers Heads of Mission). Budev, who is also accredited to five other countries (including Kenya), has very little to do other than watch over Bulgarian property left here when state-owned enterprises pulled out about 10 years ago, so it is no surprise that he was the first to respond to my request for calls. Despite having only made one visit to the U.S. (He did a motor tour of southern Texas when he was assigned to Mexico), he is very pro-American. His instructions from Sofia are to support policies of the democratic countries here, but he has no day-to-day contact with the Government of Zimbabwe (GOZ). He believes a version of 'soft revolution' will be needed to force changes in ZANU-PF and unseat hardliners in the party, and that the West needs to take a harder line with SADC, especially South Africa. He stressed, however, that these were his personal opinions developed after two years in the post, which could very well be closed within the next few years. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (SBU) Atanas Budev has been Charge of the Bulgarian Embassy in Harare since 2007 when the previous Charge, a police general, quit after only a few months. This is his first tour in Africa. He is a Latin American specialist who has served previously in Mexico, Peru, and for five years was Ambassador to Argentina. He also served in the Latin American Department of the Foreign Ministry in Sofia. He says that ten years ago, the position here was downgraded from Ambassador to Charge because Bulgaria, since the fall of Communism, has few interests in Zimbabwe. During the period when Bulgaria was Communist, many state-owned enterprises had a presence here, but they have since locked their doors and departed. The Bulgarian community here, including a few Zimbabwean-Bulgarian married couples, is about 25, so there is very little for him to do. His instructions from Sofia are to support the policies of the Western democracies, but he said he has little to no day-to-day interaction with the GOZ. He is also accredited to five other African countries (several of Zim's neighbors and Kenya), where he also has nothing to do but look after Bulgarian properties. There are

six to eight Bulgarian-owned properties in Harare.

¶4. (C) Budev said no firm decision has been made in Sofia, but he would not be surprised if in the next five years the embassy here was closed because of the lack of anything really meaningful for a Bulgarian diplomat to do. Having said all that, Budev then went on to say that his observations over the past two years lead him to believe that, if there is ever to be any meaningful change in Zimbabwe, it will come through internal change of ZANU-PF. External pressure on ZANU-PF, absent any real engagement, he said, only empowers the hardliners in the party and keeps it united under their control. What needs to happen is for the Qunited under their control. What needs to happen is for the outside powers to build contradictions within ZANU-PF. As an example, he cited the recent EU delegation that made the statement that it was willing to work with anyone who respected human rights and abided by rule of law. This set up a storm of criticism and complaint from many in ZANU-PF, who he believes were threatened by this as it was reaching out to the few moderates within the party. This form of "niceness to the bad guys," in the form of the West stating regularly that we will work with those who follow civilized rules of behavior, can embolden ZANU-PF moderates, and as long as we don't taint them by engaging them too closely, can eventually lead to them moving up in the party power structure. On the other hand, he believes we need to take a much harder line with the "good guys," meaning SADC and the other neighboring states, encouraging them to be more firm in insisting that ZANU-PF live up to agreements and work to get along with the opposition and do things that benefit all of Zimbabwe rather than just their cronies.

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¶5. (C) COMMENT: A lot of what Budev had to say makes sense, and appears to be the result of careful thought. As a Latin America specialist he is not inflicted with the historical baggage that many old Africa hands have, and looks at the situation through a fresh set of eyes. That said, he also is perhaps somewhat naive in believing that well established Western policies and behaviors will change overnight, or that there is any hope of moderates in ZANU-PF gaining the upper hand over the old hands - at least before there have been a score or more of funerals. END COMMENT.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

¶6. (SBU) On November 19, I met with Xavier Marchal, Ambassador for the Delegation of the European Commission in Harare. I had spoken with Ambassador Marchal on a few occasions at the meetings of the Fishmongers Heads of Mission, but this was my first chance to speak with him one-on-one. After pleasantries, Marchal expressed his view that we (the West) need to consider whether or not a continued hard line toward Mugabe and ZANU-PF might not be counterproductive. He said, for instance, that he is not sure what the impact right now would be of adding several more people to the sanctions list (NOTE: This subject keeps coming up. END NOTE.), even if they might possibly deserve it, because it would only solidify ZANU-PF's attitude of being persecuted by the West. At the same time, he said he didn't think it wise presently to consider taking anyone off the list, although we do need to have a coordinated view on the issue of parastatals.

¶7. (SBU) Regarding the Kimberly Process meeting in Swakopmund, Marchal said the outcome was about as good as we could have expected, and that in effect it acts like a suspension since Marange diamonds will have to have a certification from the monitor before they can be sold legally. His personal view is that, knowing at the outset that this was a battle we would lose, he is not sure that taking a firm stance on suspension was the best course of

action. I pointed out to him that we also had to consider the other constituents (such as the human rights NGOs, Congress, etc.), to which he said he fully understood, and this was just his personal opinion. His problem, he said, was that a suspension would have done nothing to curb human rights abuses, and wondered if perhaps there was not another course we could have taken. I had no answer to that question, and as I reported previously regarding a confrontation Marchal had with another European ambassador at a Fishmonger's meeting, not all of Europe is of one mind about the issue.

¶18. (SBU) Marchal said that we need to be ready for the fact that true reform and progress here will take a long time, and in his recent conversations with Prime Minister Tsvangirai, the PM also seems to understand that. As long as Mugabe is alive, he will cling to power; and the very presence of MDC in the government is a stick in the eye of ZANU-PF hardliners. In that regard, the MDC is a winner, and ZANU-PF's outbursts (orally and in the media) are just a reflection of their chagrin in being put in the position of having to accept the opposition.

¶19. (C) COMMENT: Marchal tends to be odd man out at the Fishmonger Heads of Mission meeting. The Canadian QFishmonger Heads of Mission meeting. The Canadian Ambassador, for instance, takes strong exception to his characterization of the Namibia KP meeting as a success for the process. He has on a number of occasions been in conflict with other EU member state ambassadors as well, and has, along with the EU, been accused of being 'too soft' on ZANU-PF.

CZECH REPUBLIC

¶10. (SBU) On November 20, I met with Charge d'Affaires for the Czech Republic Luke Zahradnicek and his deputy chief of mission. Like his Bulgarian counterpart, the Czech has little to do here, and is accredited to several other countries in the region. What came as a surprise was his

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announcement that his country has made the decision that until there is full implementation of the GPA, they will not upgrade his position to ambassador. The GOZ is aware of that, he said, but doesn't seem to care one way or another.

¶11. (SBU) COMMENT: With the exception of the Cuban and the Iranian, I plan to meet one-on-one with all the other resident chiefs of mission. Not all of them will have anything of use or interest to say, but I will provide reports on those that do. As for the main actors, UK, Canada, Germany, etc., who I meet regularly in the Fishmongers' meetings, I will report on what they have to say in the context of those meetings.

RAY